

March 19, 2009  
Committee on Judiciary

Committee Bill No. 5883: An Act Concerning The Unlicensed Practice of Massage Therapy

Submitted by: Lee Stang, LMT Plainville, CT

Hello, I am Lee Stang, LMT from Bridges To Health Therapeutic Massage Center in Plainville. I am speaking today in support of Committee Bill No. 5883 concerning the unlicensed practice of massage therapy.

As a LMT for over 14 years I work with clients that suffer from various medical conditions including but not limited to: MS, fibromyalgia, diabetes, congested heart failure, and various forms of cancer. Massage therapy is an integral part of the healthcare of these individuals. It is a valuable component of our overall healthcare system, now often working hand in hand, so to speak with PTs, OTs, Physicians, Osteopaths, Naturalpaths, Chiropractors and other health care professionals. It is important to ensure that licensed massage professionals are performing this service for the health and safety of the public. For this reason I encourage you to support this legislation.

Currently in the State of CT there is a growing problem with businesses opening their doors, calling themselves massage businesses but having little to nothing to do with the legitimate massage profession. At the very least they are untrained and thus unlicensed and at the most they are involved in prostitution and even human trafficking as we saw in Cheshire. They are operating under the guise of being a legitimate massage therapy business. This is dangerous to the public and to legitimate massage therapy professionals.

In discussions with local health departments and detectives in area towns we find that there continue to be gray areas in the enforcement of the current state law governing massage. Public Health Directors have told us that having a criminal penalty associated with the licensing law will give them more leverage with local law enforcement to assist in shutting down illegal businesses. The addition of criminal penalties will also help communities as local ordinances are updated. Currently many of the town ordinances regulating local massage establishments are outdated and as written actually have the potential to promote illegal activities. With the passing of this bill these ordinances can be changed to reflect the state law as they regulate the massage business and give towns an easier avenue with which to both evaluate and address illegal establishments. The criminal penalty will put some "meat" behind the law and allow for more definitive action plans be established on the local level.

An issue that the massage community has been monitoring is the crack down of neighboring NY State on unlicensed nail salons and massage. It seems that many of these people are moving into CT to set up shop. This legislation will allow local towns to monitor and combat more forcefully illegal activity that we see associated with these establishments. Towns of Waterbury, Cheshire, Milford, Bristol and Stamford have already dealt with or are dealing with these issues. Detectives working cases in these towns have informed us that a criminal penalty associated with our licensing law would make it easier for them to identify, fine and shut down illegal business.

Massage therapy is a valuable health care profession. In this age of increased stress it becomes even more important. We have an obligation to protect this profession, thus protect the public from both unlicensed individuals performing massage and businesses offering illegal services under the guise of massage. For this reason I encourage you to support Bill No. 5883. Thank You.